



Birbal the Witty



THE TEN GREATEST FOOLS

AS THE EMPEROR,
I MEET ONLY WISE
AND LEARNED MEN,
BIRBAL, NEVER A
FOOL. SHOW ME THE
TEN GREATEST FOOLS
IN THE CITY.

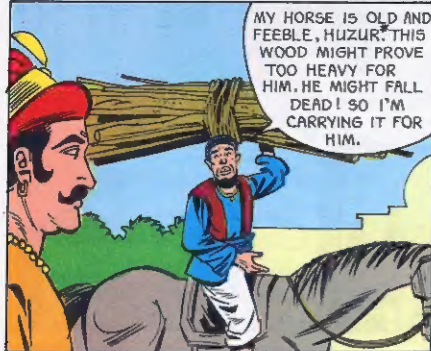
AKBAR OFTEN ASKED
BIRBAL TO DO THE
STRANGEST OF THINGS,
BUT THIS ONE BEAT
THEM ALL.

I'LL GIVE YOU
A MONTH TO
FIND THEM.

IT SHOULD BE
NO PROBLEM,
JAHANPANAH.
I MAY NOT NEED
ALL THAT
TIME.

AS BIRBAL WENT ABOUT
THE CITY LOOKING FOR
FOOLS, HE CAME UPON
A STRANGE SIGHT.

WHY DO YOU CARRY THAT
BUNDLE ON YOUR HEAD
INSTEAD OF PLACING
IT BEHIND YOU, ON
THE SADDLE?



MY HORSE IS OLD AND
FEEBLE, HUZUR. THIS
WOOD MIGHT PROVE
TOO HEAVY FOR
HIM. HE MIGHT FALL
DEAD! SO I'M
CARRYING IT FOR
HIM.



THERE CAN BE NO
GREATER FOOL
THAN THIS
ONE!



COME WITH ME, MY
MAN, AND YOU'LL
NEVER HAVE TO
CARRY ANOTHER
BUNDLE IN
YOUR LIFE.



AS THE TWO RODE ON,
THEY SAW A MAN
LYING FLAT ON HIS
BACK WITH HIS ARMS
IN THE AIR.

?

!





BIRBAL HELPED HIM UP, WITHOUT TOUCHING HIS ARMS.



NOW DROP YOUR ARMS. IF YOU COME WITH ME, I'LL BUY YOU A BEAUTIFUL SET OF POTS; FROM THE SMALLEST TO THE LARGEST SIZE!



AND YOUR WIFE
WILL BE SO
PLEASED THAT
SHE'LL NEVER
AGAIN SCOLD
YOU !



AS BIRBAL TURNED
TO MOUNT HIS HORSE—

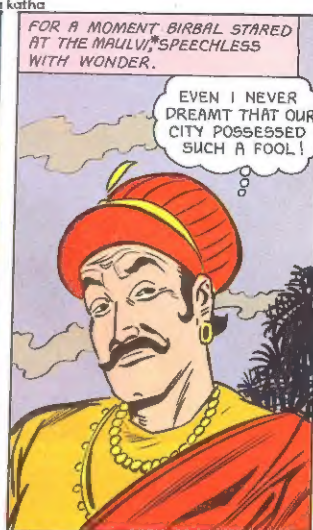


WHAT'S THE
MATTER
WITH YOU ?
CAN'T YOU
SEE...



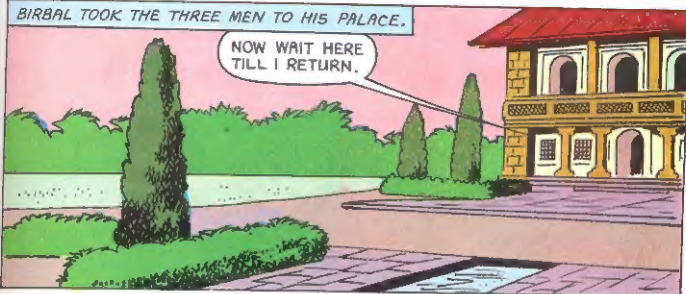
A THOUSAND PARDONS,
HUZUR. I HAD JUST
CALLED THE EVENING
PRAYER FROM THAT
MOSQUE...







BIRBAL TOOK THE THREE MEN TO HIS PALACE.



BIRBAL DID NOT HAVE TO GO FAR TO FIND MORE FOOLS.





AND I WILL,
TOO!

OH! WILL YOU?
TAKE THAT AND
THAT!

FOOLS! STOP
IT! I SAY
STOP IT!

HUZUR!

THE NEXT MOMENT, BIRBAL RECOVERED HIS COMPOSURE.

WHAT'S
HAPPENING
TO ME?

WHAT A FOOL
YOU ARE, HUZUR,
TO TAKE THESE
FOOLS
SERIOUSLY!

IF YOU AREN'T,
LET MY BONES
BREAK TO BITS
AND MY BLOOD
RUN...

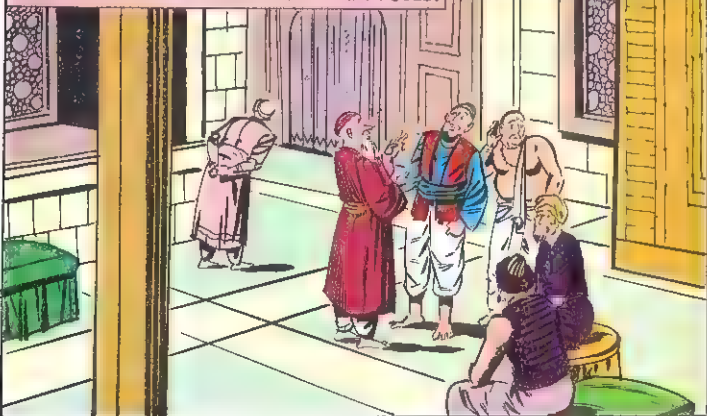
...LIKE
THIS
OIL!



WITHOUT A WORD, BIRBAL MARCHED THE THREE MEN OFF TO HIS PALACE...



...AND LEFT THEM WITH THE OTHER THREE FOOLS.



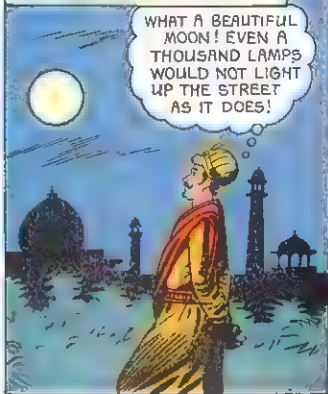
IT WAS ALMOST DARK. THE DAY'S
EXPERIENCES HAD PROVED TOO
MUCH, EVEN FOR BIRBAL.

I'D BETTER GO OUT
AND GET SOME FRESH
AIR. I'LL LOOK FOR
MORE FOOLS
TOMORROW.



A FEW HOURS LATER, AS A
REFRESHED BIRBAL WAS ON HIS
WAY BACK TO HIS PALACE —

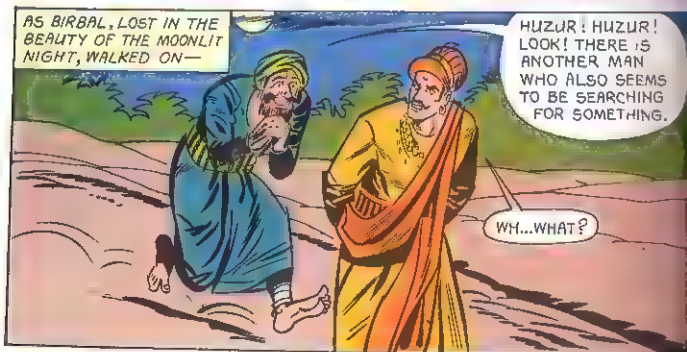
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL
MOON! EVEN A
THOUSAND LAMPS
WOULD NOT LIGHT
UP THE STREET
AS IT DOES!



WHAT ARE YOU
LOOKING FOR?

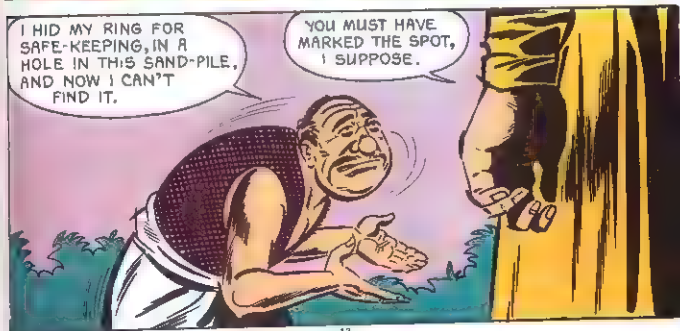
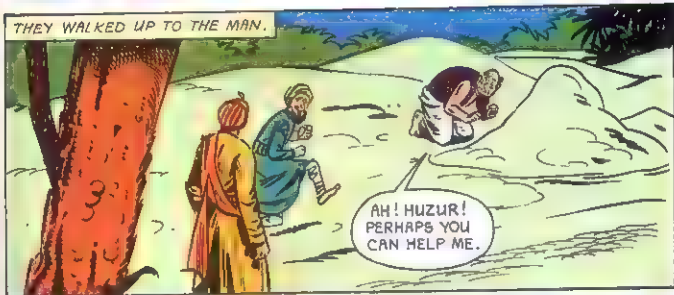
MY RING,
HUZUR







THEY WALKED UP TO THE MAN.

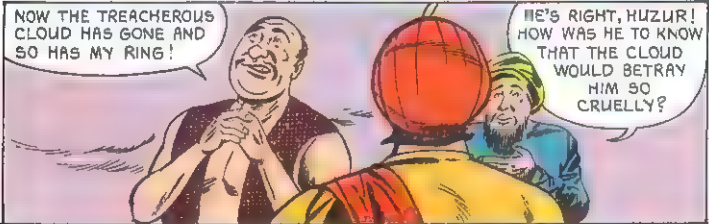


BUT NATURALLY,
HUZUR! I AM NOT
SUCH A FOOL.
THERE WAS A CLOUD
RIGHT ABOVE THE
SPOT WHERE
I HID THE
RING.



NOW THE TREACHEROUS
CLOUD HAS GONE AND
SO HAS MY RING!

HE'S RIGHT, HUZUR!
HOW WAS HE TO KNOW
THAT THE CLOUD
WOULD BETRAY
HIM SO
CRUELLY?



NEVER MIND THE
CLOUD. COME
WITH ME. WE
WILL REPLACE
YOUR RING.

YOU DON'T
MEAN IT,
HUZUR!



HE DOES! HE
IS THE KINDEST
MAN I'VE EVER
MET,

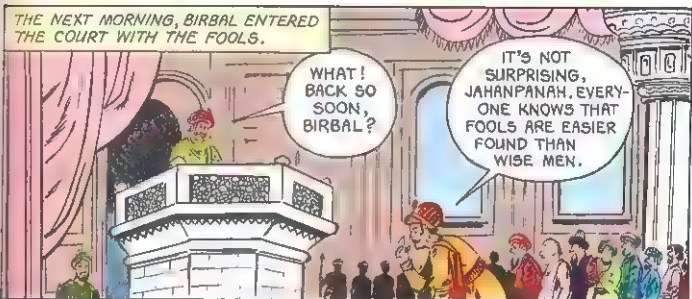


BACK AT HIS PALACE —



THERE! I HAVE
EIGHT OF THEM!
FOR THE NINTH
AND THE TENTH...
WELL!

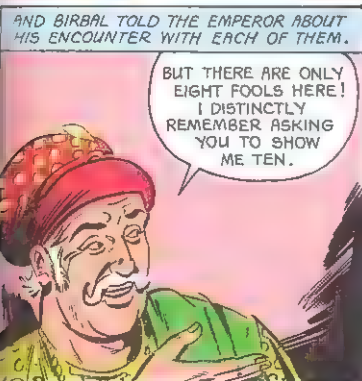
THE NEXT MORNING, BIRBAL ENTERED
THE COURT WITH THE FOOLS.



WHAT!
BACK SO
SOON,
BIRBAL?

IT'S NOT
SURPRISING,
JAHANPANAH. EVERY-
ONE KNOWS THAT
FOOLS ARE EASIER
FOUND THAN
WISE MEN.

AND BIRBAL TOLD THE EMPEROR ABOUT
HIS ENCOUNTER WITH EACH OF THEM.



BUT THERE ARE ONLY
EIGHT FOOLS HERE!
I DISTINCTLY
REMEMBER ASKING
YOU TO SHOW
ME TEN.



I BEG TO
CORRECT YOU,
JAHANPANAH.
THERE ARE TEN.

THESE EIGHT AND,
PARDON ME FOR
SAYING SO,
JAHANPANAH, THE
TWO OF US!

WHAT?

YES, JEHANPANAH. WE
HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST
FOOLS OF THEM ALL!
YOU FOR SENDING ME
ON SUCH AN ERRAND
AND I FOR
OBEYING YOU.

THE WHOLE COURT BURST OUT
LAUGHING, BUT THE LOUDEST LAUGH
WAS THAT OF THE EMPEROR, WHO
WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS FINE SENSE
OF HUMOUR.

HA HA
HA HA
HO HO
HA HA
HA HA

THE CROWS OF AGRA

ONE DAY, AKBAR'S COURTIER'S CAME TO HIM WITH A COMPLAINT.

JAHANPANAH, WHY DO YOU ALWAYS TURN TO BIRBAL WHEN YOU HAVE A PROBLEM?

BECAUSE HE HAS AN ANSWER FOR EVERYTHING - A SOLUTION FOR EVERY PROBLEM.

SO DO WE. BUT YOU NEVER GIVE US A CHANCE.

AH! HERE COMES BIRBAL. ALL RIGHT, TODAY I WILL GIVE ALL OF YOU A CHANCE.

AS SOON AS BIRBAL JOINED THEM, AKBAR LOOKED UP INTO THE SKY.



I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW MANY CROWS WE HAVE IN AGRA.

THE COURTIER'S LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER IN DISMAY.



HOW ARE WE TO KNOW ?

IT WOULD TAKE US YEARS TO FIND OUT.



IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO COUNT THEM, JAHANPANAH! THEY DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE.

NOBODY CAN ANSWER THAT QUESTION, JAHANPANAH. NOT EVEN BIRBAL!

AKBAR LOOKED AT BIRBAL.



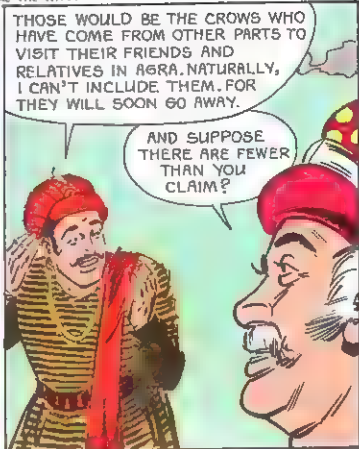
THERE ARE THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE, TO BE EXACT.

HIS PROMPT, CONFIDENT ANSWER AMAZED EVEN THE EMPEROR.

BIRBAL! HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE? YOU WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED IF YOU ARE WRONG.



I AM CONFIDENT THAT I AM RIGHT, JAHANPANAH.



BIRBAL AND THE SHAH OF PERSIA

BIRBAL'S FAME AS THE WISEST, THE WITTIEST OF COURTIER'S, HAD REACHED EVEN THE EARS OF THE SHAH OF DISTANT PERSIA.

I MUST INVITE HIM TO MY COURT AND SEE IF HE REALLY IS AS CLEVER AS HIS REPUTATION CLAIMS.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, BIRBAL CAME TO THE PERSIAN CAPITAL.

COME, HUZUR. YOU MAY PAY YOUR RESPECTS TO OUR SHAH. HE IS IMPATIENT TO SEE YOU. LET ME LEAD YOU TO HIS PRESENCE.

AS BIRBAL ENTERED THE SHAH'S DARBAR, A STRANGE SIGHT MET HIS EYES.

WHAT SHOULD HE DO?
HE HAD NEVER SEEN THE
SHAH BEFORE, AND ALL
THESE MEN WERE
DRESSED ALIKE AND SAT
ON IDENTICAL THRONES!

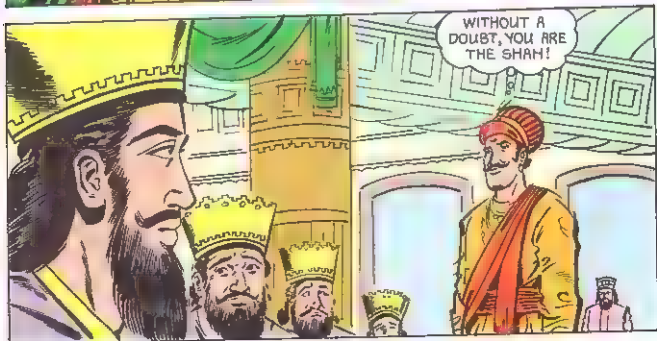
WHICH ONE
OF THEM IS
THE SHAH?



FOR A MOMENT, BIRBAL STOOD STILL
AND LET HIS GAZE TRAVEL DOWN
THE ROW OF THRONES.



WITHOUT A
DOUBT, YOU ARE
THE SHAH!

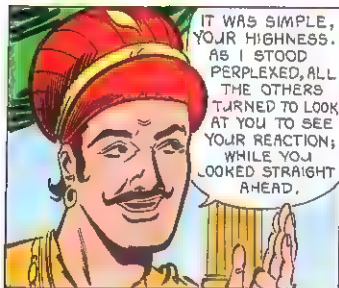




OUR EMPEROR SENDS
YOUR HIGHNESS
HIS REGARDS. HE
HAS SENT ME WITH
6,000 WHICH ARE
ON THEIR WAY TO
THE TREASURY

THE SHAH WAS AMAZED.

BIRBAL ! HOW
DID YOU
RECOGNIZE ME !
YOU'VE NEVER
SEEN ME
BEFORE !



IT WAS SIMPLE,
YOUR HIGHNESS.
AS I STOOD
PERPLEXED, ALL
THE OTHERS
TURNED TO LOOK
AT YOU TO SEE
YOUR REACTION;
WHILE YOU
LOOKED STRAIGHT
AHEAD.

THE SHAH MARVELLED AT BIRBAL'S
KEEN SENSE OF OBSERVATION.



YOU ARE INDEED
THE CLEVEREST
PERSON I HAVE
EVER MET !

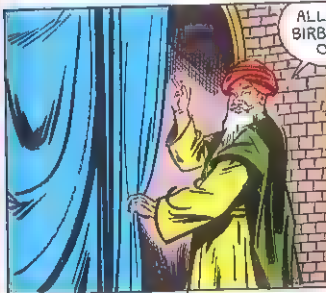
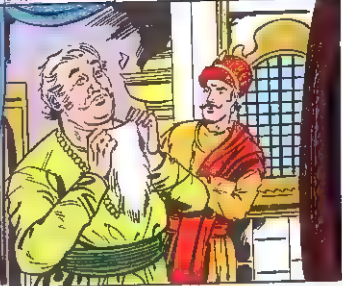


YOU SHALL HENCEFORTH
BE CALLED THE OCEAN
OF INTELLIGENCE.

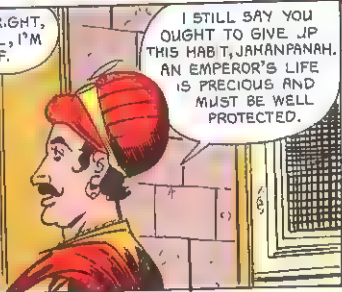
AND BEFORE BIRBAL
LEFT FOR HINDUSTAN,
THE SHAH GAVE
HIM ALL THE RICHES
HE COULD CARRY
WITH HIM.

THE SEAL

AKBAR HAD THE HABIT OF DISGUIISING HIMSELF AND WANDERING ABOUT IN THE CITY — A HABIT BIRBAL DIDN'T APPROVE OF, AS HE THOUGHT IT UNSAFE.

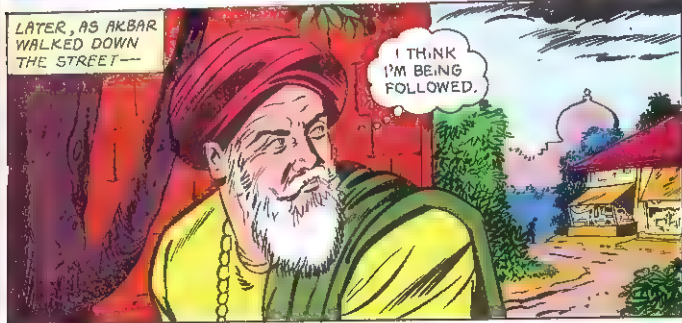


ALL RIGHT, BIRBAL, I'M OFF.



I STILL SAY YOU OUGHT TO GIVE UP THIS HABIT, JAHANPANAH. AN EMPEROR'S LIFE IS PRECIOUS AND MUST BE WELL PROTECTED.

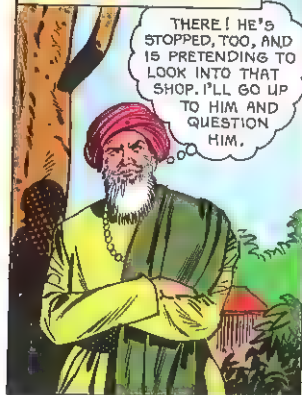
LATER, AS AKBAR WALKED DOWN THE STREET —



I THINK I'M BEING FOLLOWED.

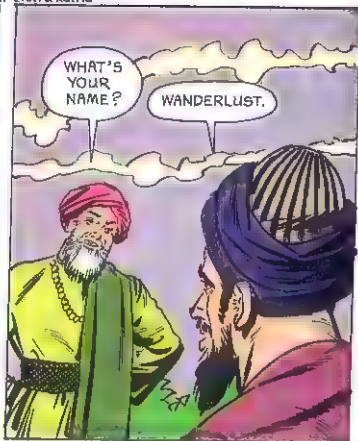
HE STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS
AND TURNED ROUND.

THERE! HE'S
STOPPED, TOO, AND
IS PRETENDING TO
LOOK INTO THAT
SHOP. I'LL GO UP
TO HIM AND
QUESTION
HIM.



WHAT'S
YOUR
NAME?

WANDERLUST.



WHAT DO YOU
DO FOR A
LIVING?

I WANDER!



WHERE DO
YOU LIVE?

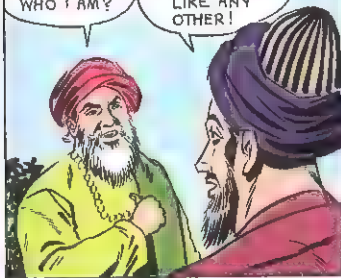
EVERYWHERE.



SO IRRITATED WAS AKBAR BY THESE ANSWERS THAT HE FORGOT HIMSELF.

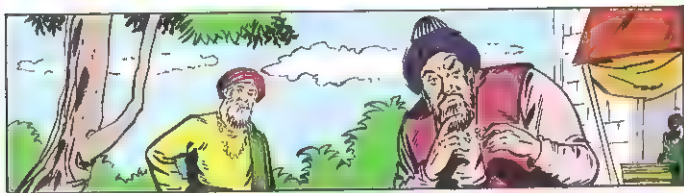
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

A HUMAN BEING LIKE ANY OTHER!



I AM THE EMPEROR. HERE IS MY SEAL, IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.

LET ME SEE IT.

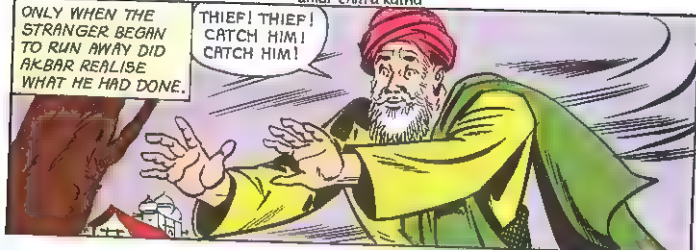


THE STRANGER SLIPPED THE RING INTO HIS CUMMERBAND.



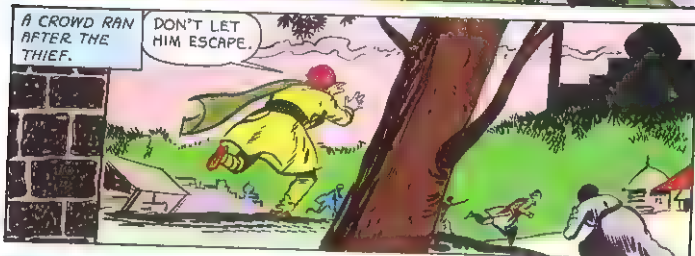
ONLY WHEN THE STRANGER BEGAN TO RUN AWAY DID AKBAR REALISE WHAT HE HAD DONE.

THIEF! THIEF! CATCH HIM! CATCH HIM!



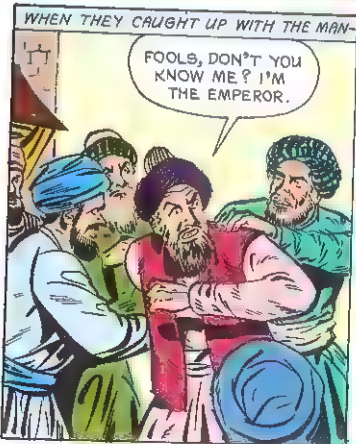
A CROWD RAN AFTER THE THIEF.

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE.



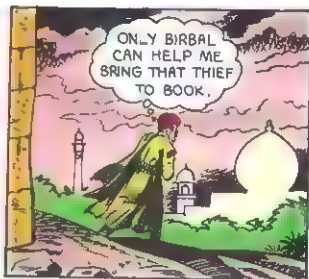
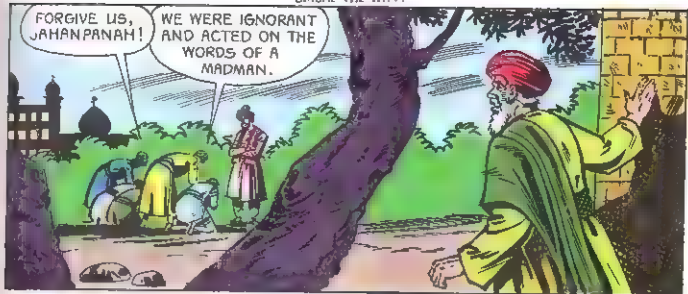
WHEN THEY CAUGHT UP WITH THE MAN-

FOOLS, DON'T YOU KNOW ME? I'M THE EMPEROR.



THIS SHOULD CONVINCE YOU, IF MY WORDS DON'T!





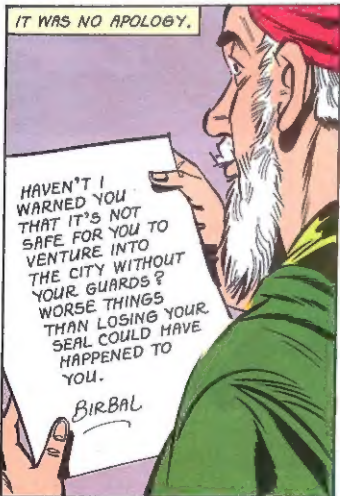
FILLED WITH SUCH THOUGHTS,
AKBAR WALKED INTO HIS CHAMBER.



HE OPENED THE PARCEL.



IT WAS NO APOLOGY.



SO IT WAS
BIRBAL! THE
ROGUE! HAI HAI!
HAI BUT I'VE
LEARNED MY
LESSON.



AKBAR THE GREAT



ONE DAY, IN OPEN COURT, AKBAR WAS TOLD BY A SYCOPHANT THAT HE WAS GREATER EVEN THAN THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE.

AKBAR THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR DAYS.

IN WHAT WAY COULD I BE GREATER THAN GOD?

UNABLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION FOR HIMSELF, HE SET IT TO HIS COURTIER.

DO YOU THINK I AM GREATER THAN GOD? IF SO, IN WHAT WAY?

WHAT SHALL I SAY?

WHY DIDN'T HE ASK THE MAN WHO SAID IT?

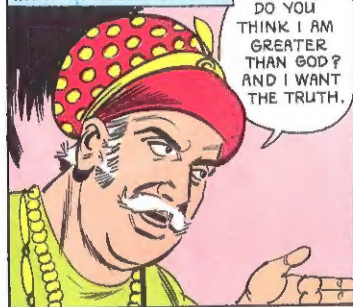
HOW CAN I ANSWER THAT QUESTION WITHOUT EITHER DISPLEASEING THE EMPEROR OR TELLING AN UNTRUTH?

WHEN, LOOKING FROM ONE FACE TO ANOTHER, AKBAR DID NOT RECEIVE AN ANSWER...



...HE TURNED TO BIRBAL.

BIRBAL,
DO YOU
THINK I AM
GREATER
THAN GOD?
AND I WANT
THE TRUTH.



WHY
JEHANPANAH,
BEYOND A
DOUBT YOU
ARE!



BIRBAL, ARE YOU
TRYING TO
FLATTER ME?

NOT AT ALL, JAHANPANAH.
THERE IS CERTAINLY
ONE THING YOU CAN
DO THAT GOD
CAN'T.





AKBAR SMILED.

